

FLOOD INFORMATION SHEET

HEALTH RISKS AFTER A FLOOD Tips on How to Protect Your Family

Food safety: Preventing food-borne diseases

- The Department of Health advises that individuals should not eat any food that may have come into contact with contaminated water from floods or tidal surges.
- Commercially prepared cans of food should not be eaten if there is a bulging or opening on the can or the screw caps, soda pop bottle tops or twist-caps.
- Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if you remove the labels and then disinfect the cans in a bleach solution. Use ¼ cup of bleach in one gallon of water; re-label the cans including expiration date and type of food. Assume that home-canned food is unsafe.
- Infants should be fed only pre-mixed canned baby formula. Do not use powdered formulas prepared with treated water. Use boiled water when preparing formula.
- Frozen and refrigerated foods can be unsafe after a flood. When the power is out, refrigerators will keep foods cool for only about four hours. Thawed and refrigerated foods should be thrown out after four hours.

Sanitation and Hygiene: Preventing waterborne illness

- Basic hygiene is very important during this emergency period. Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected before eating, after toilet use, after participating in cleanup activities and after handling articles contaminated by floodwater or sewage.
- Flood water may contain fecal matter from sewage systems, agricultural and industrial waste and septic tanks. If you have open cuts or sores exposed to the floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and disinfected or boiled water. Apply antibiotic ointment to reduce the risk of infection. If a wound or sore develops redness, swelling or drainage, see a physician.
- Do not allow children to play in floodwater. They can be exposed to water contaminated with fecal matter. Do not allow children to play with toys that have been in floodwater until the toys have been disinfected. Use ¼ cup of bleach in one gallon of water to disinfect toys and other items.

Power Outages: Preventing fire hazards

- Using battery-powered lanterns and flashlights is preferable to using candles.
- If you must use candles, make sure you put them in safe holders away from curtains, paper, wood, or other flammable items.

Post Flood Clean-up:

- Clean up debris to avoid injury and contamination.
- Chainsaws should only be operated in safe conditions (not in water soaked areas) and by people that are experienced in proper use.
- Lift heavy debris by bending knees and using legs to help lift.
- Wear shoes to avoid injury to the feet from glass, nails or other sharp objects.
- Avoid contact with downed power lines.
- Be alert to wildlife (snakes, alligators, etc.) that may have been displaced as a result of the situation.

Clearing Standing Water: Preventing mosquito-borne illness

- Heavy rains and flooding can lead to an increase in mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are most active at sunrise and sunset. Public health authorities will be working actively to control the spread of any diseases transmitted by mosquitoes.
- To protect against mosquitoes, DOH urges the public to remain diligent in their personal mosquito protection efforts. These should include the “5 D’s” for prevention:
- Dusk and Dawn – Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are seeking blood. For many species, this is during the dusk and dawn hours.
- Dress – Wear clothing that covers most of your skin.
- DEET – When the potential exists for exposure to mosquitoes, repellents containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide, or N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide) are recommended. Picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus are other repellent options.
- Drainage – Check around your home to rid the area of standing water, which is where mosquitoes can lay their eggs.

Tips on Repellent Use

- Always read label directions carefully for the approved usage before applying a repellent to skin. Some repellants are not suitable for children.
- Products with concentrations of up to 30 percent DEET are generally recommended. Other potential mosquito repellents, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in June 2007, contain picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. These products are generally available at local pharmacies. Look for active ingredients to be listed on the product label.
- Apply insect repellent to exposed skin, or onto clothing, but not under clothing. In protecting children, read label instructions to be sure the repellent is age-appropriate.
- According to the CDC, mosquito repellents containing oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under the age of 3 years. DEET is not recommended on children younger than 2 months old.
- Infants should be kept indoors or mosquito netting should be used over carriers when mosquitoes are present.
- Avoid applying repellents to the hands of children. Adults should apply repellent first to their own hands and then transfer it to the child’s skin and clothing.

- If additional protection is necessary, apply a permethrin repellent directly to your clothing. Again, always follow the manufacturer's directions.

Tips on Eliminating Mosquito Breeding Sites

Elimination of breeding sites is one of the keys to prevention.

- Clean out eaves, troughs and gutters.
- Remove old tires or drill holes in those used in playgrounds to drain.
- Turn over or remove empty plastic pots.
- Pick up all beverage containers and cups.
- Check tarps on boats or other equipment that may collect water.
- Pump out bilges on boats.
- Replace water in birdbaths and pet or other animal feeding dishes at least once a week.
- Change water in plant trays, including hanging plants, at least once a week.
- Remove vegetation or obstructions in drainage ditches that prevent the flow of water.

For further information, please contact your local county health department or visit www.doh.state.fl.us or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

For more state and federal information on emergency and disaster planning, visit the following Web sites: www.FloridaDisaster.org, www.RedCross.org, www.ready.gov or www.fema.gov.

The Florida Emergency Information Line: 1-800-342-3557

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